

**Before the
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Application of CarolinaConnect Cooperative, Inc.)	
for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications)	Docket No. 2021-15-C
Carrier Pursuant to Section 214(e)(2) of the)	
Communications Act of 1934)	

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF D. GLENN MARTIN

Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND CURRENT EMPLOYMENT.

A. My name is D. Glenn Martin. I am the Chief Executive Officer of CarolinaConnect Cooperative, Inc. (“CarolinaConnect” or “Applicant”). CarolinaConnect is a domestic non-profit Internet cooperative organized and existing under the laws of the State of South Carolina. It was incorporated in South Carolina on February 5, 2016 and is currently in good standing.

Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY?

A. I offer my testimony in support of CarolinaConnect’s application for designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (“ETC”) in this proceeding.

Q. PLEASE STATE A SUMMARY OF YOUR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AND TRAINING.

I have more than 30 years of experience in the communications industry. After graduating from Clemson University in 1984, I began my management career at Fieldcrest Cannon’s locations in North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. From 1989 to 2016, I worked in various capacities at Comporium, a multifaceted telecommunications company headquartered in Rock Hill, South Carolina. While there, I led several corporate departments and subsidiary companies.

Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE APPLICANT'S BUSINESS PLANS, INCLUDING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PLANS FOR DEPLOYMENT.

- A.** CarolinaConnect, through its participation in the Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium, has been allocated Rural Digital Opportunity Fund ("RDOF") Phase I support by the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") as a winner in the RDOF Phase I auction. CarolinaConnect plans to use the RDOF Phase I support to deploy and operate a new fiber-to-the-home network that will provide high-speed Internet access and Voice over Internet Protocol ("VoIP") services to all members of Newberry Electric Cooperative, Inc. ("NEC") and Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc. ("MCEC"). Applicant will deploy high-speed broadband and interconnected VoIP services throughout the RDOF Phase I-eligible census blocks identified in Exhibit A to its ETC application in this proceeding. A map of CarolinaConnect's proposed ETC designation area is provided in Exhibit B to its ETC application.

CarolinaConnect will offer low-latency broadband service at actual speeds of at least 1 Gbps downstream and 1 Gbps upstream and at least 2 TB of monthly usage. In addition, CarolinaConnect will provide its customers with voice-grade access to the public switched telephone network through its provision of interconnected VoIP-based voice service.

CarolinaConnect is committed to complying with the deployment obligations and timetables imposed on RDOF Phase I support recipients by the FCC. Accordingly, it plans to commercially offer voice and broadband service to 40% of a calculated number of locations in South Carolina by no later than the end of the third full calendar year following funding authorization, and 20% each calendar year thereafter.

Q. PLEASE EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAROLINACONNECT, NEC, AND MCEC.

A. Newberry Electric Cooperative and Mid Carolina Electric Cooperative are members of CarolinaConnect. As a cooperative, CarolinaConnect does not have shareholders. The members of CarolinaConnect are the governing authority of CarolinaConnect.

Q. ARE YOU AWARE OF OTHER COOPERATIVES IN SOUTH CAROLINA USING FIBER OPTIC INFRASTRUCTURE TO EXTEND NEEDED BROADBAND AND INTERCONNECTED VOIP-BASED VOICE SERVICES TO THE HOME?

A. Yes. There are multiple companies in South Carolina and around the country that are actively deploying or planning to deploy fiber optic infrastructure to provide broadband and interconnected VoIP services, including TriCoLink, Inc and RiverNetConnect.

Q. WHY ARE RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES PARTICULARLY WELL-SUITED TO PARTNER WITH IN TERMS OF PROVIDING FIBER TO THE HOME SERVICES?

A. Rural electric cooperatives are particularly well-suited to partner with to deploy broadband in unserved rural areas because the areas where electric cooperatives own infrastructure are often in areas unserved by broadband. CarolinaConnect's non-profit cooperative business model is based on long-term plant investment regardless of customer density. That model fits well with fiber optic deployment. Moreover, cooperatives have a long history of superior customer service, affordable rates, and reliability that have been carried over into CarolinaConnect's culture.

Q. WHY IS FIBER OPTIC OR BROADBAND SERVICE SUCH A NECESSITY TO THE GENERAL POPULATION, BOTH FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES AND BUSINESSES?

A. Fiber is a long-term investment that meets the needs of broadband demand growth for the next few decades. No other technology can attract economic development investment. Businesses do not locate in areas because of other technologies like they will for fiber offerings. Fiber is the only

technology today that can meet the needs of growing demand of bandwidth consumption. Fiber's low latency - delays unnoticeable to humans - is also ideal for utility communications and time sensitive switching applications.

Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MEANS, MANNER, AND METHOD BY WHICH CAROLINACONNECT INTENDS TO EXTEND FIBER OPTIC TO THE HOME.

A. The fiber optic plant will be constructed in the electric space on the pole and will follow existing underground routes to all substations, electric distribution devices, and eventually to all meter locations of NEC and MCEC.

Q. HOW DOES APPLICANT PLAN TO PROCEED IF GRANTED ETC STATUS?

A. As I have stated, CarolinaConnect seeks ETC designation from the Commission to serve the ROOF Phase I-eligible census blocks that are listed in Exhibit A of its ETC application. Subject to being granted ETC designation by this Commission, Applicant will deploy broadband and interconnected VoIP-based voice services throughout the census blocks in which it was awarded RDOF Phase I subsidies by the FCC, as well as in additional areas.

Q. IS APPLICANT QUALIFIED UNDER FEDERAL AND STATE LAW TO RECEIVE THESE FUNDS?

A. As shown in its application for designation as an ETC, CarolinaConnect meets all the federal and state regulatory requirements for ETC designation. Designating Applicant as authorized to receive RDOF Phase I support, as well as federal Lifeline support, in the census blocks requested will serve the public interest by enabling CarolinaConnect to provide voice and broadband services to consumers and businesses in its proposed ETC designation area, as well as subsidized broadband and/or voice services to qualifying households.

Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?

A. Yes.